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Lucretia

Flemish, sixteenth century
Anonymous Gift, 1922

A Roundel of Painted Glass

Attributed to Lucas van Leyden (1494-1533)

THE Print Department has received the gift of a roundel of painted glass, undoubtedly of Flemish origin, which dates from about 1530. It represents the "Death of Lucretia," and the figure reproduces Marcantonio Raimondi's famous engraving after a drawing by Raphael. The "Death of Lucretia" was engraved at Rome in 1510 and is considered to be one of the most beautiful of Marcantonio's plates. Vasari tells us that it was this print, shown to Raphael by some friends of the engraver, which induced the painter to allow some of his drawings to be published as engravings.*

It is an interesting supposition that this roundel may be by Lucas van Leyden, who ranks among the greatest of the sixteenth century engravers. We know that van Leyden was a painter on glass, having learned the art from Peter, the son of Cornelis Engelbrechtsz, in whose studio he worked. Windows in the churches of San Stefano, in Milan, and St. Jans Kerk, in Gouda, have been attributed to him, and a glass picture representing the "Triumph of David," in the Ambrosiana at Milan, is generally admitted to be his. A roundel entitled "Ecce Homo," in the Rijks Museum at Amsterdam, of yellow and brown colored glass, 23½ centimeters in diameter without the border, is also regarded as his work. It is very similar to the engraving of "Ecce Homo" in the series by van Leyden, called the Round Passion of 1509, but a certain inexperience of execution indicates that it dates from 1508.†

The present roundel measures 20½ centimeters in diameter and is in neutral tones, the brilliant silver stain supplying the only color. It is painted and fired on the surface and has none of that mosaic structure which is characteristic of the

stained glass of the earlier Gothic age, though the surrounding lead work suggests that it may have formed a part of a larger work or that an ornamental border had been added.

A number of small roundels are attributed to van Leyden in inventories and auction sale lists of the seventeenth century.* The excellent preservation of the present roundel implies that it has been regarded as a cherished and valuable work of art.

The figure of Lucretia is undoubtedly traced from Marcantonio's engraving, though the inscription and the background are different; but the background of the engraving was itself borrowed from Lucas van Leyden's print of "Susannah and the Elders" (B. 33), executed about two years earlier.

It is well known that van Leyden and Marcantonio borrowed each other's ideas; but it is in his latest period, from 1528 onward, that van Leyden was most influenced by Marcantonio, both in regard to technique and subject-matter. The large "Adam and Eve" and "Lot and His Daughters" are completely in Marcantonio's manner. Van Leyden died in 1533 after an illness of years; but though his activities as an engraver ended in 1530 we are told that he worked incessantly until the day of his death. "*On peut même dire avec vérité qu'il a travaillé jusqu'au dernier moment de sa vie, car dans la longue maladie dont il mourut il avait trouvé le moyen de graver et de peindre dans un lit.*"† It is very possible that during these last few years his activities found play in the less exacting art of painting on glass, while the somewhat rough and unfinished execution in the present roundel bears out the theory that it was a work of the artist during his last years. If this be true, the Museum possesses a roundel fairly to be attributed to Lucas van Leyden, taken in the main from one of the most magnificent of the engravings by Marcantonio after a drawing in Raphael's most perfect manner.

D. C. S.

THE VACATION STORY-HOURS FOR CHILDREN, provided by the liberality of a friend of the Museum and arranged with the coöperation of various branch libraries, settlement houses and public playgrounds of the city, will be resumed July 1, and will continue daily morning and afternoon through August. The children are brought in special cars from meeting-places arranged beforehand and spend about an hour and a half in the Museum under guidance. They first hear an illustrated talk, then are taken to the galleries to see some of the objects mentioned, and are afterward dismissed, each with a postcard of some object spoken of. This year during July there will be two series of talks, one conducted by Mrs. Mary W. Cronan, Story-teller at the Boston Public Library, and the other by Miss Margaret L. Wheeler, Assistant in Instruction at the Museum.

*Vasari, III, page 497.

†N. Beets. Lucas de Leyden, pages 71-72.

*Franz Dülberg. Lucas van Leyden, page 6.

†Bartsch, Vol. VII, page 335.